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Diana T Fritz 06/05/2007 04:15:52 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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SIPDIS  
TELEGRAM

January 15, 2003

To: No Action Addressee  
Action: Unknown  
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 237 - UNKNOWN)  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PTER, KDEM  
Captions: None  
Subject: S/P DIRECTOR HAASS AND CHIEF OF STAFF MUHAMMAD BIN  
ZAYID DISCUSS IRAQ, IRAN AND SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS  
Ref: None

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S E C R E T ABU DHABI 00237

SIPDIS  
CXABU:  
ACTION: POL  
INFO: RSO AMB DCM P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA  
DRAFTED: POL:STWILLIAMS  
CLEARED: A/DCM:TEWILLIAMS

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OO RUEHC RUCNRAQ RUEHDE RHEHNSC RUEKDIA RUEAIIA  
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7900  
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1113  
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 2695  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/UNMA//  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP/J3//  
RUCJACC/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ3/CCJ4/CCJ5//  
RUCQSOC/USCINCSOC MACDILL AFB FL

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 000237

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/P - AMBASSADOR RICHARD HAASS  
ALSO FOR NEA/ARP  
NSC FOR ABRAMS AND CLARKE  
CENTCOM FOR POLAD AMBASSADOR LITT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/11/2013  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KWMN](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [TC](#)  
SUBJECT: S/P DIRECTOR HAASS AND CHIEF OF STAFF  
MUHAMMAD BIN ZAYID DISCUSS IRAQ, IRAN  
AND SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

REF: ABU DHABI 114

11. (U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba,  
Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

12. (S) SUMMARY: Policy Planning Director Ambassador Richard Haass, Ambassador Wahba and Armed Forces Chief of Staff LTG Shaykh Muhammad Bin Zayid Al-Nahyan (MBZ) had a lively exchange on Iraq, Iran and Saudi-US relations, among other issues, over a two-hour lunch on January 8. MBZ briefed that the UAE, anticipating a negative public reaction to U.S.-led military action against Iraq, would prefer the international cover of a second UNSCR. He recommended that the U.S. concentrate on getting humanitarian supplies to the Baghdad area early on as Saddam will likely go into siege mode and will not hesitate to cut the capital off. As with other visiting U.S. officials, MBZ emphasized the need for U.S. engagement with the Qataris to rein in Al-Jazeera. He briefed Ambassador Haass on a rumor circulating in Baghdad about a deal that has been cut between the USG and Saddam. MBZ queried Haass about the latest USG thinking on Iran. He posited that Tehran is more capable of controlling Hezbollah than Syria but nevertheless encouraged greater U.S. interaction with Bashar Al-Asad. He downplayed the rift between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, noting that UAE-Saudi ties were more complicated but that Abu Dhabi realized the importance of maintaining a dialogue with Riyadh. MBZ encouraged continued USG engagement with the Saudis, though he took a dim view of some of the Al-Saud. MBZ also briefed Ambassador Haass on what the UAE had found aboard five Afghan airliners that had been diverted and searched in the UAE the previous day (see reftel). END SUMMARY.

13. (C) Policy Planning Director Ambassador Richard Haass visited the UAE from January 7-9. In addition to his meeting with MBZ in Abu Dhabi, Ambassador Haass met with the Country Team, students from the all-female Zayid University (septel) and UAE Central Bank Governor Sultan Nasser Al-Suweidi (septel). In Dubai, Ambassador Haass met with Dubai Crown and UAE Defense Minister Shaykh Muhammad Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (septel) and dined at the Consul General's residence with a host of Dubai intellectuals and business elites. Ambassador Wahba, S/P staffer Dr. Meghan O'Sullivan, and Polchief joined Ambassador Haass for his lunch with MBZ. MBZ was joined by Shaykh Saeed Bin Hamdan Al-Nahyan, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research Director Dr. Jamal Al-Suweidi and Special Assistant Yousef Al-Otaiba.

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MBZ ON IRAQ: UAE PREFERS SECOND UNSCR; RECOMMENDS PRIORITY  
BE GIVEN TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR BAGHDAD AREA  
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14. (S) The UAE would prefer a second UNSCR approving the use of military force should a peaceful resolution of the world community's differences with Iraq prove impossible to achieve, according to MBZ. In response to Haass' query as to whether such a resolution would render easier the UAE's military cooperation with the coalition, MBZ averred that a UNSCR would make the prospect of a military confrontation easier to market to a skeptical public in the Arab and Muslim world. Nevertheless, MBZ noted that the UAE decision on support of U.S.-led action with or without a second resolution was final. Responding to MBZ's question about U.S. plans for a post-Saddam Iraq, Haass outlined four challenges: humanitarian, political, security and reconstruction. MBZ recommended a robust humanitarian assistance program for the Baghdad area, noting that U.S. forces would encounter little resistance in the north and south. MBZ predicted that a recalcitrant Saddam would hole-up in Baghdad and cut off food supplies to the capital in order to trigger a humanitarian crisis, which he could then blame on the U.S. According to Emirati sources in Iraq, Saddam has ordered the distribution of food supplies to families in the Baghdad area to cover a 3-7 day period only.

15. (S) MBZ noted that public opinion in the Arab world would be containable provided military action was short and decisive. Keeping Israeli PM Ariel Sharon in his box was

also important. Returning to a common theme in his discussions with visiting U.S. officials, MBZ emphasized the importance of reining in the Doha-based Al-Jazeera satellite network prior to any military action. He recommended against sending in journalists with war fighters -- at least in the beginning -- as the prospect of televising scenes of civilian casualties was just too risky. MBZ said it was a mystery to him why the Qataris continued to inflame public opinion via JSC and suggested that the U.S. use its weight to pressure Doha. He laughingly recalled a meeting at the start of the Afghan campaign between Qatari Emir Hamad Al-Thani and Shaykh Zayid in which Hamad complained about a report he had received that MBZ had asked General Franks to bomb Al-Jazeera. According to MBZ, Zayid derisively responded: "Do you blame him?"

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LIBERATED IRAQIS WILL DANCE IN THE STREETS BUT RUMORS ARE  
CIRCULATING IN BAGHDAD THAT U.S. AND SADDAM HAVE CUT A DEAL  
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¶6. (S) Responding to Haass' question on how the Iraqis would view a U.S.-led campaign that results in the ouster of Saddam, MBZ said "they will come out and dance in the streets." He warned, however, about rumors circulating in Baghdad that the U.S. has cut a deal with Saddam. Citing trusted UAE intelligence sources, MBZ briefed that the U.S. is said to have laid down seven conditions under which the threat of military action will be taken off the table:

- Iraq confesses to possession of two "biological containers;"
- Iraq agrees not to attack Israel;
- Iraq cancels its agreement with Russia over the "Majnun" oil field;
- The regime agrees to amend the Iraqi constitution;
- A multi-party system is instituted;
- The Baghdad government is reorganized;
- Iraq agrees to convene free and fair elections.

¶7. (S) Ambassador Haass noted that on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being completely unbelievable, he rated MBZ's information as registering a "14". MBZ asked about U.S. plans for a post-Saddam leadership and hoped that the Iraqi exiles would not be ushered in, noting that they would not find acceptance among the Iraqi people.

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MBZ STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF SENDING MESSAGE TO IRAN TO  
RESTRAIN HEZBOLLAH IN ADVANCE OF ACTION AGAINST IRAQ  
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¶8. (S) Turning eastward, MBZ asked for the latest USG thinking on Iran. Haass briefed that there were two debates in USG circles: a) where is Iran heading, i.e. is it on the edge of radical change or will reform come slowly, and b) what should the U.S. be doing, i.e. should we be dialoguing with the regime or should we be isolating them. He noted that a consensus was emerging that Iran over time will become more democratic. Nevertheless, Ambassador Haass continued, Iran is a civilization with "Persian ambitions" and "civilizations have goals," such as the acquisition of nuclear technology. The U.S. had engaged Tehran somewhat successfully at the launch of the Afghan campaign, with regard to stemming the flow of terrorists. Washington, Haass continued, was particularly concerned about the possibility of an uptick in Hezbollah attacks against Israel should the U.S. lead a coalition military attack on Iraq. In the U.S. view, both Iran and Syria could restrain Hezbollah. MBZ disagreed with the ability of Syria to fully influence Hezbollah, but suggested that certain Iranians could be far more effective if they were to receive our message. He warned that Hezbollah fighters are far more educated, specialized, tough and, as a result, more lethal, than their Al-Qaida counterparts. The Iranians, MBZ noted, are scared to death about the prospect of U.S.-led military action against Iraq, fearing that they will be next on the list.

¶9. (S) With regard to Syria, MBZ encouraged continued USG engagement with Bashar, noting that otherwise, "the wrong guys" will fill the vacuum. In MBZ's estimation, Bashar is active and "wants to do good," although his relative youth and inexperience are real drawbacks.

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SAUDI-QATAR RELATIONS LESS COMPLICATED THAN SAUDI-UAE TIES;  
U.S. SHOULD PURSUE A QUIET DIALOGUE WITH THE AL-SAUD  
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¶10. (C) MBZ downplayed tensions between the Saudis and Qataris noting that the two populations share Wahhabi roots. By contrast, Saudi-UAE relations were far more complex, MBZ continued, drawing Haass' attention to Abu Dhabi's nagging bilateral border dispute with Riyadh (the Al-Shayba oil field). Nevertheless, the ever pragmatic Emiratis recognized the need to deal with the Saudis and have thus maintained good relations with Riyadh.

¶11. (S) MBZ encouraged continued engagement by the U.S. with the Al-Saud, commenting that the negative spin in the U.S. media complicated Crown Prince Abdullah's ability to institute reforms. MBZ cited a recent poll in which 90 percent of Saudis believe that, following a regime change in Iraq, the U.S. will turn its sights on changing the government in Riyadh. While MBZ took a dim view of some of the senior Al-Saud -- sardonically noting that Interior Minister Nayef's bumbling manner suggested that "Darwin was right" -- he wagered that the situation would be far different were Fahd in complete control of his faculties or, by contrast, if Abdullah was in total control. Clearly, the incompleteness of the leadership transition in Saudi Arabia rendered decision-making more problematic, in MBZ's view.

¶12. (U) This cable has been cleared by Ambassador Haass.

WAHBA